



# Back to back

## Warren wins Wilderness Challenge

**Airman 1st Class Connor Elayan**  
*Public Affairs*

They put together a four-person team weeks before an exhausting two-day challenge in the Appalachian Mountains. They trained every day for a week before the event. One team member completed all events with a sprained ankle.

Even though they faced the challenges of the harsh environment and even harsher competitors, as a team they pressed on to defend their title as the Wilderness Challenge Champions.

The Crazy Cowboys, Warren's Wilderness Challenge team, took first place for the second year in the row in the 2004 Wilderness Challenge Oct. 8 and 9 in Fayetteville, W. Va.

The Crazy Cowboys consisting of Capt. Amanda Osborne and 1st Lt. Eric Vanley, 37th Helicopter Flight; 2nd Lt. Joe Sundy, 90th Civil Engineering Squadron; and 2nd Lt. Brian Holzer, 90th Maintenance Operations Squadron, beat out 55 other teams from the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines and Navy. Each team was comprised of four servicemembers, at least one of which was a female, and all participants must be active duty military or guard and reserve on active status.

The team, previously called the Warren Warriors, has competed in the competition for the past three years, taking home first place for two consecutive years.

They decided to change their name this year to better describe their team.

"[We changed it to] Crazy Cowboys because it was pretty crazy to do this event without training and cowboys because, well, it's Wyoming," said Lieutenant Vanley.

The wilderness challenge is a strenuous two-day competition consisting of six events. It is held annually in the mountainous region of West Virginia.

The first day began with six-mile mountain run. The team's time ends when the last person crosses the finish line.

"We had harnesses looped around us to pull each other along," said Lieutenant Holzer.

The day ended with a half-mile mountain swim and a three-hour whitewater raft race.

Day two started with 10-mile mountain bike and a two-hour kayak race also called the "duckies".

"The duckie race was one of the more challenging events for the team," said Lieutenant Holzer. "It's the event the other teams caught up on us on."

The day finished with a 14-mile mountain hike/run through some of the roughest terrain

in the Appalachian Mountains, which proved to be a challenge for the Crazy Cowboys.

"It's up and down hills and on some parts there's no trail," said Lieutenant Holzer. "It ends with three miles completely uphill."

"My right foot went numb on about mile two and my left ankle was twisted two days before the competition," said Lieutenant Vanley. "I still have a limp."

Competing against stiff competition like the Marine Corps team who were reigning champions until last year, and the Kitties, an all girl Army team, Capt. Osborne says that the key to success at Wilderness Challenge is teamwork.

"It is a team event and the team is only as strong as it's weakest member," she said. "Therefore, it is in the best interest of the team for the stronger members to literally pull anyone who is struggling."

One strategy the Cowboys used to keep the team together was "webbing."

"Many of the teams this year used webbing to link themselves together and increase total time," said Capt. Osborne. "Our team did the same."

The Warren team is planning on competing in the 2005 Wilderness Challenge to reclaim the title of Wilderness Challenge Champions for the third year running.



**Warren's 2004 Wilderness Challenge team, the Crazy Cowboys, consists of :**  
**Capt. Amanda Osborne and 1st Lt. Eric Vanley, 37th Helicopter Flight; 2nd Lt. Joe Sundy, 90th Civil Engineering Squadron; and 2nd Lt. Brian Holzer, 90th Maintenance Operations Squadron**